

Theresa May out or in, Brexit deal must stand, says MEP

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News

Regardless of whether UK Prime Minister Theresa May wins or loses this evening's vote of no confidence in her leadership of the Conservative Party, the Brexit deal agreed by the UK and the EU must remain unchanged, says Greens group MEP Philippe Lamberts.



Photo credit: Press Association

Greens co-leader Philippe Lamberts says the Brexit deal agreed by the EU and UK must stand, irrespective of whether UK Prime Minister Theresa May is ousted from her position.

The Belgian MEP said that even if there is a change in leadership “it doesn’t matter, as any new leader would face the same legal constraints as Mrs May.”

Lamberts’ comments come as UK Prime Minister Theresa May is due to face a vote of no confidence in her leadership of the Conservative Party this evening, after the threshold of 48 letters to Sir Graham

Brady, Chairman of the 1922 Committee, was reached.

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Brady said that he had spoken to the Prime Minister and that she “was very keen that matters be resolved as quickly and as reasonably as possible.”

Conservative MPs will vote between 1800 and 2000 GMT tonight in a secret ballot. If more than half of MPs vote that they have no confidence in May, a leadership contest will be triggered, in which she will not be allowed to stand.

May has already been publicly backed by Cabinet Ministers, including the Home Secretary Sajid Javid, the Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt, the Work and Pensions Secretary Amber Rudd, the Environment Secretary Michael Gove, and the Housing Secretary James Brokenshire.

Backbenchers Nick Boles and Ed Vaizey are also among those who have said they will vote for the Prime Minister.

“Any new leader would face the same legal constraints as Mrs May” **Philippe Lamberts**
MEP

However, in a joint statement, Jacob Rees-Mogg and Steve Baker, the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the European Research Group (ERG), said, “Theresa May’s plan would bring down the Government.

“But our party will rightly not tolerate it. Conservatives must answer whether they wish to draw ever closer to an election under Mrs May’s leadership. In the national interest, she must go.”

In a statement outside Number 10 Downing Street, May pledged to fight the vote of confidence “with everything I’ve got.”

“A change of leadership in the Conservative Party now would create uncertainty when we can least afford it. It will not change the fundamentals with the European Union or the parliamentary arithmetic,” May added.

A FIRM ‘NO’ FROM THE EU

Philippe Lamberts was scornful of the failure to back the deal the two sides took eighteen months to agree.

“If the aim of all this is to try and reopen negotiations over the Withdrawal Agreement and Political Declaration then the answer from the EU side must be a firm no.”

“If, however, this is about giving British people the chance to have another vote and reconsider the

decision to leave the EU, then in that case I think the EU might be willing to grant an extension to Article 50 and give the UK the extra time to do this.”

Lamberts also dismissed May’s mini-tour of Europe earlier this week, where she tried to gain the support of some EU leaders.

He said she “could not have expected to extract any more” from the whistle-stop tour to three EU countries.

“There is no way around the deal that has been agreed and no amount of diplomatic language is going to change that,” he added.

“RIDICULOUS”

Speaking separately, German MEP Udo Bullmann described the current situation on Brexit as “ridiculous.”

Addressing a news conference in Strasbourg, he also agreed that the EU had no further room to make changes to the deal agreed by May and the EU.

He spoke shortly before Parliament bosses decided to remove from the agenda a planned plenary debate on Brexit.

“With the UK exit date approaching fast, we urge both sides to do their utmost to facilitate the ratification of the Withdrawal Agreement” **BusinessEurope President Pierre Gattaz**

Speaking ahead of Thursday’s EU summit, European council president Donald Tusk said, “The intention is that we will listen to the UK Prime Minister’s assessment, and later, we will meet at 27 to discuss the matter and adopt relevant conclusions. As time is running out, we will also discuss the state of preparations for a no-deal scenario.”

CONCERNS FOR BUSINESS

Meanwhile, a leading European business body said it is “extremely concerned by the recent developments on Brexit.”

BusinessEurope said the postponement of the vote on the Withdrawal Agreement increases uncertainty and is a blow for companies desperate for clarity.

“A No Deal Brexit would have dramatic economic consequences and must be avoided,” it stated.

BusinessEurope President Pierre Gattaz said: “The Withdrawal Agreement is vital for business as it includes a transition period with the UK staying in the Customs Union and the Single Market at least until December 2020. This is the only way to give time to companies to prepare and adjust.”

“With the UK exit date approaching fast, we urge both sides to do their utmost to facilitate the ratification of the Withdrawal Agreement.”

Talking about the future, Gattaz added, “The aim of business is to get an ambitious and comprehensive framework for the future that ensures as close as possible economic relations between the EU and the UK while preserving the integrity of the single market.”

“In the meantime, preparations for a No Deal scenario need to be stepped up. Politicians on all sides need to live up to their responsibilities and ensure that all the legal and material conditions are in place to mitigate disruption and make the exit the least damaging possible.”

“Among others, this needs to ensure that supply of food and medicines is not disrupted, transport and key infrastructure operate normally, citizens’ rights are maintained (including residence, working and travelling), data continues to flow, customs remain effective and operational, financial markets remain stable and Irish peace and stability is protected,” Gattaz added.

Commenting on the current Brexit topic, SMEUnited President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller stressed that “the postponement of the vote and the further delay regarding the outcome after March 2019, only intensifies the uncertainty for SMEs. We urgently need clarity on the future regulatory framework for our SMEs, and on a way forward.”

“With the dark cloud in the shape of Brexit hanging over Europe, it is even more important to address the SME topics for the future of Europe,” Rabmer-Koller added.

About the author

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